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**Title: A Vision for Postmaternalism: Institutionalising Fathers' Engagement with Care**

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### **Short biography**

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## **A Vision for Postmaternalism: Institutionalising Fathers' Engagement with Care**

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### **Abstract**

Social policy development under neo-liberal logic glorifies paid work in the market over relationships involving care, nurture and dependency. Under neoliberal conditions, the social policy framework in a large number of welfare states has moved towards the norm of the adult worker model. The prevalence of this model, which signalled a 'farewell to maternalism', has had the consequence that supporting mother's care giving roles is dismissed in state policy making. Such neo-liberal logic leads to the creation of an apparent cultural anxiety about caregiving and nurturing. Julie Stephens (2011) calls this 'postmaternal' thinking. Drawing on feminist critiques of neoliberal developments in social policy, this paper provides a divergent and even slightly positive interpretation of postmaternalism that does not abandon care and nurture. This is evident in the recent development of parental leave policies that institutionally encourage men to become involved with caring. I argue that a 'farewell to maternalism' in social policy is therefore not too problematic. Parental leave policy particularly with institutionalised incentives for men to take up parental leave is creating a transformative space for men to experience the maternal thinking that confronts the cultural logic of what Stephens conceptualises as postmaternal thinking.

Keywords: care; parental leave policy; feminist social policy; maternal thinking; postmaternalism; gender equality

### **Introduction**

The concept of 'postmaternity' has recently been theorised by feminist scholars, such as Julie Stephens (2011). It is part of a critique of the changing cultural, economic and political conditions experienced through the influential neo-liberal cultural logic which gives prominence to a rational and autonomous self. As Stephens (2011) argues, under neo-liberal conditions, social policy in a large part of Europe and North America has moved towards the norms of the adult worker model (Lewis and Giullari 2005). In this model it is assumed that all adults whether male or female, parents or otherwise, should enter the labour market. The roots of this shift are multifaceted and can be traced firstly through the claims of those in the second wave of women's liberation for labour market participation and access to equal work and pay, and secondly in neo-liberal ideals of market individualism, liberal freedom and small

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government. However, the underpinning premise of neo-liberal logic that envisages all individuals as autonomous selves is only made possible by disregarding the complexity of care responsibilities and ignoring the fact that, inevitably, we all need to be cared for and to varying degrees during different life stages. The prevalence of the adult worker model, which signalled a 'farewell to maternalism' (Orloff 2009), has had the consequence that 'maternalist ideology has long departed from state policy decision making' (Stephens 2011:20). Stephens (2011) goes on to identify how neo-liberal logic leads to the creation of an apparent cultural anxiety about care giving, nurturing and human dependency. She calls this 'postmaternal thinking'.

Stephens' perception of postmaternal thinking emerged from understandings of social policy, the discourse surrounding care and the process of cultural forgetting that has accompanied the repudiation of the maternal in Australia and the U.S. This research leads her to revisit Ruddick (1995) on the concept of maternal thinking. Maternal thinking is defined as a type of reasoning created and developed through the daily practice of continuous effort in building sustainable relationships with unpredictable and, as yet, unimagined difference (Ruddick 1995, 134). Stephens' response to the question Ruddick (1995: 194) poses as to 'why the complex modes of thought and action that constitute maternal thinking' have been forgotten or overlooked in social policy and beyond appears in the text *Confronting Postmaternal Thinking: Feminism, Memory and Care*. In this book, it is Stephens' conviction that the way to challenge gender-neutral neo-liberal policies which disregard human dependency and vulnerability is to cast off a feminism based on 'gender neutrality under the guise of equality' and instead 'reinvigorate the strands of feminism that are attuned to gender difference' (Stephens 2011,137). She argues that the task for feminism is to actively remember maternal thinking as the paradigm for an alternative model of social and political life (*ibid*,142). It is claimed that the intersection between feminism, environmentalism and peace politics can therefore be portrayed as an alternative feminist politics (*ibid*,143).

The article investigates a different interpretation of postmaternalism to that of Stephens', as it is evident in parental leave policy in various countries such as Iceland, Sweden, South Korea and Canada (Québec) that men are being institutionally encouraged to become involved with caring. This policy extends the opportunity for men to engage in maternal practice and to acquire maternal thinking. I argue that a 'farewell to maternalism' is acceptable, because maternalist policy is too problematic. It restricts the opportunity to be engaged with maternal practice and thinking to women alone and excludes men.

The article starts by examining the literature on feminist social policy scholarship which shows a divergent, and perhaps even a slightly positive interpretation of postmaternalism. I adopt the concept of postmaternalism for an investigation of social policies that extend opportunities and obligation for men to become engaged with care.

After sharing Stephens' attention to the theoretical and methodological significance that Ruddick (1995) ascribes to her concept of maternal thinking, I examine recent policy development in the area of parental leave. I argue that parental leave policy which includes incentives to encourage fathers to take it up serves the function of institutionalising men's experience of maternal practice. Thus, this aspect of parental leave policy allows us to envisage a postmaternalism that does not abandon care, nature and human dependency.

### **Welfare states, gender and responsibility for care: feminist social policy scholarship**

In this section, I aim to expound Stephens' (2011) engagement with the feminist critique of neo-liberal developments in social policy. I re-examine the literature on welfare states' interventions to citizen's engagement with both paid and unpaid care work, as well as the gendered balance between both types of work. By incorporating the significant contributions made by feminist scholars on welfare states and gender, this paper aims to discuss a different vision of postmaternalism that is imagined by feminist welfare states scholarship to challenge neo-liberal logic in policy development. I argue that the universal care model proposed by Fraser (1994) is normatively desirable, but suggest that the dual earner/caregiver model (Gornick and Meyers 2008) is a more pragmatic model which aims to shift the focus of social policy into the domestic sphere and enhance men's participation in caring.

Referring mainly to Orloff's work, Stephens (2011) positively acknowledges the feminist critique of social policy development under neo-liberal influence that glorifies paid work in the market over relationships involving care, nurture and dependency. The policy shifts since the 1990s throughout the developed world, and in particular in English-speaking countries, has held the dominant neo-liberal view that recognition and support should only flow to those who are economically active (Stephens 2011). She argues that the current dominance of 'degendered social policy' which expects all citizens to be paid workers undervalues caregiving, as social rewards are given to paid labour, but not to unpaid caregiving (*ibid*). Eligibility for social security benefit has been crucially connected to the employment status of claimants in the historical development of welfare states, and this welfare-market nexus has been the central feature of the welfare state since its establishment. Despite the fundamental and universal importance of care, the responsibility for providing care and the necessity of receiving care have not been sufficiently recognised and rewarded during the development of welfare states (Yamashita 2014).

Welfare states, which are systems of social provision, distribution and regulation, and the gender relations within them, have been the foci of considerable feminist research. Ungerson (1987), one of the pioneering feminist social policy scholars, addresses the significance of policy

analysis in understanding the influence of welfare systems on women's life as follows:

Of course, research into the impact of ideology on people's lives inevitably leads to questions about how ideology and behaviour interact (...) behaviour is subject to such a range of determinants and constraints. But ... the way in which the structure of state benefits and the allocation of state resources actually determines the way people behave, more directly tackles the issues of material effects. (Ungerson, 1983, 45)

As Ungerson argues, the arrangement of welfare has a decisive influence in enhancing or reducing gender equality. Social policies recognise and offer institutional support to some models of caring and family organisation while sanctioning others. Feminists have explored how the social and cultural categories of gender come to be understood, constructed and transformed through the institutions, practices and policies of welfare states. Analysis of how welfare states are gendered has stressed the linkages between specific gendered divisions of labour, models of family life and social policy configurations (e.g. Jenson 1997; Leila 2006; Lewis 1992; Sainsbury 1996; Orloff 1996; 2009). Care work, especially unpaid care work, has been central to many feminist understandings of gender and welfare (e.g., Daly 2002; Daly and Lewis 2000; Finch and Grove 1983; Land 1978; Lewis 1992; Pfau-Effinger 2005; Ungerson 1987).

It is beyond the scope of this article to fully engage with the respected body of feminist welfare state scholarship. The focus of this paper is to expand Stephens (2011) discussion on the feminist research that questions the prevailing adult worker model under neo-liberal logics of gender-neutrality in the public sphere. I argue that this feminist research proposes different versions of postmaternalism which have the potential to offer alternatives to the kind of postmaternalism that Stephens critiques.

Fraser (1994) puts forward three feminist visions of a post-industrial welfare state; a universal breadwinner model, a caregiver parity model and a universal caregiver model. She argues that welfare systems were in crisis as the male breadwinner model was crumbling. It was then suggested feminists could engage in 'systematic reconstructive thinking about welfare states' (*ibid*, 593) and she asked if a new gender order should replace the family wage thus informing 'an emancipatory vision'. The universal breadwinner model aims to achieve gender equality by promoting female employment and requiring care support services to be designed to 'free' women from the caring responsibilities that create obstacles to women's full engagement with 'paid' work. Fraser (1994) importantly argues that if this model is to succeed, it must redress the widespread lack of valorisation of care work, as well as skills and jobs coded as feminine, and it must remunerate such jobs with breadwinner-level pay.

If the model's success depends on these conditions, the universal breadwinner model is not likely to become 'an emancipatory vision'. This is because it accepts the primacy of the public sphere for individual empowerment, flourishing and identity, and as a primary site for gender equality. It also views caregiving as a 'problem' to be solved through the commodification of care, enabled by increased availability of child and elderly care.

It is thus understood that the adult worker model, which is the dominant and neoliberal model (Lewis and Giullari 2005; Stephens 2011), is an inevitable and modified version of the universal breadwinner model. None of the welfare states implemented effective policy to redress the undervaluation of care work, skills and jobs coded as feminine. In other words, the adult worker model promoted 'equality' in terms of workforce participation and encouraged women to enter the labour market in steadily increasing proportions, but it did so without valorising and remunerating care and other skills and jobs associated with femininity.

As Lewis and Giullari (2005), point out, there is evidence that policy-making in most European welfare states has been moving towards an adult worker model (or dual adult worker model in their terminology). The model is prevalent throughout the developed world beyond Europe and in countries such as Australia, Canada, the U.S. (Orloff 2006), South Korea and Japan (e.g., Lee 2011), but in each country there are notable differences in its implementation. For instance, the U.S. approach is to increase women's labour market participation through the market expansion of care services, accompanied by less gender discrimination in the labour market. By contrast, Sweden's approach focuses on public care support for women to enable their participation in the labour market, but which is gender discriminated and segregated (Orloff 2009). In other countries, such as Spain, Italy and Japan, the adult worker model has not been accompanied by the expansion of public childcare support services nor the reduction of the gender gap in the labour market. Rather, it has been supported informally by extended family networks or privately financed 'employment' of documented and undocumented migrant workers (Pfau-Effinger 2005).

These countries are identified as having 'familialism' in their social policy framework, where care giving is privatised in the public sphere. According to Esping-Anderson (2009), familialism is a concept where the family assumes the bulk of welfare responsibility towards its family members, in terms of both income distribution and care provision. He argues that familialistic social policy is 'anathema' to family formation (Esping-Anderson 2009). Welfare states that have taken a familialistic approach to the provision of care but still encourage women to participate in the labour market are now witnessing a dramatic decline in fertility rates. This phenomena indicate that the alignment between the neo-liberal logic and familialistic social policy may lead women to have less children, which can be identified as an outcome of postmaternalism.



The second vision of Fraser's (1994) three feminist visions of a post-industrial welfare state is a caregiver parity model which aims to enhance gender equality principally by supporting informal care work. It requires care work to be regarded and remunerated as other paid employment (Fraser 1994). Examples of relevant policy programs are carer/caregiver allowance, parental leave and carer leave. In addition to these measures, there can be exemptions in social security contributions and taxation. If the caregiver parity model is to be successful in promoting gender equality, the allowances must be sufficiently generous and comparable to the equivalent rate of a breadwinner wage. The caregiver parity model problematises income inequality and the lack of recognition for care work; however, it does not view the gendered distribution of labour as problematic. As a result, it often involves little incentive for men to take up care allowances or parental leave. In addition, for both the universal worker/adult worker model and the caregiver parity model, paid employment represents the general norm.

Stephens (2011,19) emphasises that by perceiving women in the same way as men, neoliberal policy intersects with feminist demands for freedom and autonomy. This intersection between neoliberal policy and feminist demands has had a significant cost for women. It could be posited that, even with less neoliberal influence, support for the universal breadwinner model is an almost inevitable means for feminist promotion of gender equality in welfare state politics. This is because the main foundational functions and aims of the welfare state were to tackle the contingent risks for citizens facing exclusion from the labour market. Therefore, entitlement to social security benefits is based on labour market participation or engagement in paid work. For instance, Esping-Anderson's (1990) welfare regime theory developed and adopted the analytical concept of 'de-commodification' with which the extent to which people could sustain their own living outside of the labour market was measured. In response to Esping-Anderson's theory of the welfare regime, feminist scholars argue that women's labour needs to be commodified first in order to be decommodified, so that women can also have as equal an entitlement as that of men to social security programmes. As expressed in such a claim, women's participation to the labour market was pursued by feminist scholars as the primary agenda in order to achieve equality of access to welfare state benefits and services.

At the same time though, as Stephens frequently points out, a significant strand of feminism was never built on the assumed equivalence between workforce participation and emancipation (Stephens 2011, 22). Also, feminist scholars not only supported women's participation in the labour market, but also supported men's participation in domestic and unpaid work. Stratigaki's (2004) analysis provides an interesting account of 'the cooptation of gender equality policy' that occurred within the European Union (EU) policy-making

process. Stratigaki (ibid.) sheds light on the changes in the meaning of gender equality in EU acts, changes which happened in order to create compatibility with prevailing political and economic priorities in the EU. She reveals a shift in the meaning of the concept of the 'reconciliation of working and family life', as it gradually changed from an objective with feminist potential (sharing care and domestic work between women and men) to a market-oriented objective; 'encouraging flexible forms of employment' for women to manage both paid and unpaid work.

As illustrated by the discussion above, the primacy of paid work is dominant in both the universal breadwinner model/adult worker model and the caregiver parity model. Neither of these models challenges the assumption of an autonomous, independent worker as the model citizen envisaged by neo-liberalism. The ideal universal breadwinner model encompasses the provision of sufficient services for women to fully participate in paid employment on par with men. The caregiver parity model seeks to recast unpaid care work in the mould of paid work. Both models are concerned with the redistribution of what has conventionally been viewed as the domain of men's work, that is, paid employment, and the reconceptualisation of care work and other noneconomic activities to resemble paid work. The dominant concern of policies in relation to enhancing gender equality has been to support (sometimes force) women to participate in paid work, or to recognise unpaid care work with the monetary equivalence and value of paid work. However, the remaining gender inequality in the labour market and the 'double shift' women endure in 'reconciling work and family life' indicate that focusing only on increasing women's participation in the labour market cannot achieve gender equality. In order to achieve gender equality, the redistribution of what is considered as primarily women's work, namely care work, is required. According to Fraser (1994, 611) the key to achieving gender justice in a postindustrial welfare state, then, is to 'make women's current life-patterns the norm for everyone'. Her work, however, falls short in considering what policy can institutionally encourage such change in men's behaviour. This paper aims to explore this question by examining policy evidence related to parental leave. The next section investigates the vision Fraser (1994) proposes, the universal carer model.

### **The dual-earner and dual-caregiver model: a different version of postmaternalism**

In the universal carer model, all citizens are assumed to be participants in both paid and unpaid work, and employment systems and welfare systems need to be reconstructed in order to support both men and women in carrying out this dual responsibility. She argues that the universal caregiver model would liberate citizenship from its androcentric roots by necessitating many men to become more like most women. The universal caregiver model would dismantle 'the opposition between breadwinning and caregiving' and 'integrate activities that are currently separated from one another, eliminating their

gender coding' (Fraser 1994, 611). Kershaw (2006) also points out that the need to reconfigure social institutions to induce far more men to take additional responsibility for caregiving is the principle theme in feminist citizenship research.

The idea that the reorganisation of paid work, unpaid work and welfare requires influencing men's behaviour to encourage them to participate in care and domestic work underpins other scholars' research into gender justice (e.g. Cass 1994; Esping- Anderson 2009; Kershaw 2006; Orloff 2009). For instance, Orloff (2006, 2009) also deems the universal carer model a theoretically desirable direction, allowing social policy to contribute to the enhancement of gender equality. After examining the prevalence of the adult worker model, which signals a farewell to maternalism, she argues that the universal care model is a utopian idea but the ultimate solution to the problems of reconciling employment, care and women's economic dependence (Orloff 2009).

Yet, the universal caregiver model is concerned with a certain part of care that would never be commodified, and assumes that care would be provided as a non-market activity. It would thus necessitate changing workplaces to accommodate caregiving, and more significantly would call upon income security systems to insure that people can take time to care and have access to care services. In this sense, it is argued that the introduction of a basic income will build a social security system for realising the universal caregiver model (McKay 2008; Rubery 2015; Yamamori 2009). Providing an income to all its members on an individual basis, without means testing or the requirement to be part of the labour market, a basic income offers every citizen access to a guaranteed income, regardless of marital or employment status. Levitas (2013) emphasises that a basic income at an adequate level for a decent existence is the only basis for effective validation of, and adequate recompense for care work, voluntary work and other non-market activities.

Nevertheless, whether a basic income would enhance the recognition of care and unpaid work and encourage the sharing of this type of labour between men and women is a central question for feminist scholars considering the implications of a basic income for gender equality. I have argued that a basic income itself is not sufficient to reduce unequal gender divisions of labour since a basic income does nothing to destabilise this inequality (Yamashita 2014). The universal caregiver model is normatively desirable, as a basic income will, to some extent, untangle the links between welfare and labour and enhance the recognition and valorisation of a wider variety of unpaid activities (Yamashita 2014). It would promote women's economic independence regardless of their labour market participation (Alstott 2011). With all these theoretical potentials, the universal care model supported by basic income legislation can be a powerful proposal for addressing neoliberal logic that gives prominence to an autonomous self and disregards care giving and human dependency. There is, however, a shared

understanding that a basic income needs to be part of a raft of other measures in the redistribution of care and unpaid work between women and men if the gendered distribution of paid and unpaid work is to be redressed (e.g. Pateman 2004; Robeyns 2008; Yamashita 2014). In addition, the universal carer model supported by Basic Income legislation has not yet been introduced in any welfare state. As Orloff (2009) comments, the universal carer model is the ultimate 'but possibly utopian' solution, and identifying the way forward is not equivalent to meeting the political resources required to undertake the journey.

The model that envisages men and women contributing 'equally' to paid employment and domestic work is also referred to as a dual-earner dual-caregiver model (e.g. Crompton 1999; Gornick and Meyers 2008). The universal carer models and dual earner and dual caregiver models are treated as the same concept (Dearing 2016; Gornick and Meyers 2008), but they are different in their thinking of what gives income security to citizens. As named, the dual-earner and caregiver model envision a social and economic outcome in which men and women engage 'systematically' in both paid work and in unpaid care giving (Gornick and Mayers 2008). In addition, it also assumes that the state would support both parental and non-parental care for children, providing access to quality care across families with different means (Crompton 1999). Gornick and Mayers (2008, 324) suggest three areas of policy that help parents share 'equally in the costs and benefits of earning and caring': paid family leave granting parents the right to take time off to care for children, regulation of working time enabling parents to reduce and reallocate employment hours for caring, and early childhood education and care, all of which would be publicly subsidised and of a high standard of quality. The dual earner caregiver model is gaining some policy attention through the implementation of parental leave policies which designates a time period of leave for fathers who engage in caring.

I argue that the dual earner and dual caregiver model is not comparable with the universal carer model as it venerates labour market participation for women and men. Rather, the dual earner caregiver model combines the adult worker model with the care parity model which aims to regard and remunerate care giving as equivalent to other paid employment. Thus this model allies with social policy under the neoliberal influence that upholds the primacy of labour market participation. Accordingly, there is accumulating evidence of policy implementation that supports a dual earner caregiver model. The dual earner caregiver model, then, reflects a key feature of postmaternal thinking.

The dual earner and caregiver model, however, proposes a different version of postmaternalism in which maternal practice is not limited only to women. This model often encompasses a type of parental leave policy that institutionally encourages men to become engaged with caring and thus to acquire maternal thinking. The proceeding discussion

will investigate such policy developments after revisiting Ruddick's concepts of 'maternal thinking', as these highlight the significance of policy which can influence men's involvement with care giving.

### **Do men do maternal thinking?**

The reorganisation of paid work, unpaid work and welfare requires influencing men's behaviour; care must become an obligation of men's citizenship because the disregard in which most men hold care work is coupled with the added risk of economic insecurity and dependence that many women encounter. In addition to this point, I would argue, care must become an obligation of men's citizenship because men are excluded from engaging in maternal practices, thus missing opportunities to learn maternal thinking. In other words, Ruddick's (1989) concept of 'maternal thinking' offers additional justification for the desirability of men to be engaged with the early stages of caring for children. In this section, a brief discussion of maternal thinking is first offered. I highlight the societal meaning and significance of maternal thinking, as well as the profound importance of both men and women experiencing maternal practice. This sustains the point that the dual earner and caregiver model / universal carer model is the vision that the welfare state should aim to achieve.

In order to understand the significance of maternal thinking, it is salient to understand how central and complex the question of 'femininity' is in feminist thought.

That dilemma can be summarised as follows: If there is to be feminism at all, we must rely on a feminine "voice" and a feminine "reality" that can be identified as such as correlated with the lives of actual women; and yet at the same time all accounts of the feminine seem to reset the trap of rigid gender identities, deny the real differences between women (white, heterosexual women are repeatedly reminded of this danger by women of colour and by lesbians) and reflect the history of oppression and discrimination rather than an ideal or an ethical positioning to the Other to which we can aspire (Connell 1999, 3).

In other words, a dilemma always exists as to whether to deny 'femininity' and to strive for a universal existence, or to eschew universality. Maternal thinking does not fall into this dichotomy. It is an attempt to identify the social meaning of mothering, and to universalise what is considered a 'feminine reality'. As Stephens (2011) points out, the theoretical problem with essentialism haunts any discussion of mothering. The primary focus of the second-wave feminists has been one long struggle against essentialism, whether this be biological, cultural or ideological (Stephen 2011,10). By theorising mothering as a form of 'practice-based reasoning', Ruddick manages to construct the concept without falling into the trap of essentialism.

In her book *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, Ruddick addressed her philosophical interests as follows:

Or, more daringly, were there alternative ideals of reason that might derive from women's work and experiences, ideals more appropriate to responsibility and love? (Ruddick 1989,9)

Ruddick went back to study Wittgenstein, Winch, and Habermas and found that 'all thinking arises from and is shaped by the practices in which people engage'. Then she posed a question that had never been properly asked; 'what then is a women's practice?' (Ruddick 1989, 9). Ruddick thus reflected on how mothering had never been considered as a rational activity. She aimed to 'articulate distinct ways of thinking about the world; for example, about control, vulnerability, 'nature', storytelling, and attentive love (Ruddick 1989, 12). By doing so, she revealed alternative ideals of reason different from those associated with impersonal, detached and objective judgment.

According to Ruddick, maternal practice is constituted by love, nurturance and training. Each practice aims to meet the demand for preservation, growth and the social acceptability of the lives of children. Those who commit to maternal practice continuously try to respond to these demands which arise from a child's birth, however, cannot predict the consequence or influence of their own practice to. 'Whatever you do, is somebody going to get hurt? Love may make these questions painful; it does not provide the answer. Mother must *think* (Ruddick 1989, 23). In such relationships with children, mothers reflect on their practice and think what needs to be done.

Some mothers struggle to create nonviolent ways of living with and among children. They school themselves to renounce violent strategies of control and to resist the violence of others despite provocation, exhaustion, and multiple temptations to assault and passivity. Second – and as part of the struggle towards non-violence– some mothers strive to create welcoming responses to bodily life despite the disturbing wilfulness, difference, frailty and neediness of the vulnerable bodily beings in their charge (Ruddick 1989, xix).

Okano (2012, 213) argues that, by describing the tensions and struggles mothers experience in responding to demands from children, Ruddick resists idealising motherhood but identifies thought emerging between mothers and their children as an 'ideal more appropriate to responsibility and love'. Importantly, it is maternal practice that creates a different way of seeing, knowing and acting. As a form of practice-based reasoning, maternal thinking is not confined only to mothers, but it is an ideal that can be realised to varying degrees by women and men (Stephens 2011). As DiQuinzio (2009, 120) argues, maternal thinking also indicates that 'mothering is an individually and socially significant practice in which both men and women can and should practice'. In this way, it undermines essentialist/maternalist claims that all women and only women should be mothers. Women acquire maternal thinking through engaging with maternal practice. Maternal thinking is not ascribed to mothers. This means that men can become 'mothers' through engaging with maternal practice. If Ruddick's concept of maternal thinking as practice-based reasoning and thinking is to be

valued as a public form of reflection, the significance of encouraging men to become involved in the practice is apparent.

Maternal practice is historically considered to be part of a woman's role and is deeply embedded in the construction of gender. Moreover, as Fraser (1994) addresses, the construction of breadwinning and caregiving as separate roles, coded masculine and feminine respectively, is a principal undergirding of the current gender order. Thus, it is difficult to imagine that the change of men taking a greater part in maternal practice will occur without institutional arrangements and force. In the next section, I will return to the discussion of social policy scholarship and examine how social policy can best support men in engaging with caring.

### **Parental leave policy and men's engagement with maternal thinking**

The implementation of a 'father's quota' that reserves some portion of leave for each parent has become the 'most popular' gender equality policy (Dearing 2016), especially in the Nordic countries (Gíslason 2007). The trend is also recently observed beyond the Nordic countries, such as the U.K. and South Korea (Kim 2015). For instance in Sweden, parental leave policy development has focused on promoting men's use of leave with the intention of encouraging men to take more responsibility for their children, as well as freeing women's time for participating in the labour market (Hass and Hwang 2008; Almqvist and Duvander 2014). The data which revealed the gender division in parental leave take up, rather than women's economic participation rate, became one of the most cited indicators of gender equality in Sweden (Almqvist and Duvander 2014). Iceland has also made a radical progress in the development of its parental leave policy during the last two decades. The law on parental leave in 2000 provides fathers and mothers with equal rights to three months non-transferable leave, equipping Icelandic fathers with the longest non-transferable period of parental leave in the world (Arnalds, Eydal and Gíslason 2013).

South Korea is another interesting example that implemented 'daddy's month' to encourage fathers to take parental leave in 2015 (revised in 2016). In the case that one parent (usually the mother) takes parental leave first and then the other parent (usually the father) takes parental leave, the allowance for the first three months of leave for the second parent is 100 per cent of prior earnings with a ceiling of KRW1,500,000 (€1152). Its take up rate has been steadily increasing.

There is a growing body of literature examining whether fathers taking leave influence the division of care between parents. Paternal leave use has been related to later increased father-child engagement and more equal sharing of childcare and domestic work (Almqvist and Duvander 2014; Arnalds, Eydal and Gíslason 2013; Hass and Hwang 2008; Kotsadam and Finseraas 2011; Rahel 2014). For instance, Hass and

Hwang (2008) found that men who took parental leave also reported taking more childcare responsibility and providing more hours of childcare involvement, as well as experiencing higher satisfaction with child contact. Although just taking leave is 'not significant enough a departure from traditional gendered expectations' (Hass and Hwang 2008, 99), the number of days of leave taken had a significant and positive impact on fathers' participation in child care and fathers' relations with children. Similar findings that fathers' leave promotes involvement in childcare and housework is presented based on analysis of Norwegian survey data (Kotsadam and Finseraas 2011), and also based on survey data with Icelandic fathers (Amalds, Eydal and Gíslason 2013). Kim (2015) discusses the changes in attitudes to caring and family relationships among fathers who took parental leave in South Korea and argues that parental policy can be the key to institutionally changing men's behaviour. The research so far provides evidence that paternal leave matters in increasing men's sharing of childcare.

The shared interest among these studies is to explore whether social policy can be an instrument for changing the 'traditional' division of labour for childcare that was once strongly supported by the male breadwinner model that modern welfare regimes have all subscribed to varying degrees. To this end, Hook's (2006) extensive study of time user surveys from 20 countries found that the policy context especially affects fathers' unpaid domestic work, childcare and their availability for taking leave. Interestingly, her work also revealed that lengthy parental leave taken by mothers decreases a father's unpaid work time by reinforcing women's role as caregiver during a critical period of change in the division of unpaid domestic labour. Evidence that highlights the importance of state level policy in facilitating men's experience of taking leave is also provided by Rahel (2014), based on strategic qualitative research on comparing the experience of fathers in three different policy contexts in Montreal, Toronto and Chicago. She argues that when the transition to parenthood is structured for fathers in ways comparable to mothers, fathers come to think about and enact parenting in ways that are similar to mothers (ibid).

Men's capacity for 'mothering' is also much demonstrated by the existing research (e.g., Doucet 2009; Ranson 2015). For example, in the U.K., there exists an increased recognition of a father's changing roles: in comparison to traditional ideals, the 'new' father is more intimate, more nurturing and seeks an active role in childcare (Featherstone 2009, Dermott and Miller 2015). Based on the analysis of fathers in Canada, the UK, the US and Australia, Ranson (2015) explores the transformative experience of men who do the work more often associated with a mother, namely caring for babies and young children. They became deeply attached to the children in their caring practice, and committed to engaged involvement in family life (Ranson 2015).

In sum, there seems to be sufficient evidence that policy is crucial in motivating men to take parental leave, and that the experience of taking



parental leave positively influences a father's relations with his children. The taking of paternal leave also enhances their contribution to sharing child care and domestic labour. Referring to Ruddick (1995), Rahel (2014,111) addresses this point:

The opportunity to experience the transition to parenthood freed of the demands and constraints of work provides fathers the space to develop a sense of responsibility that is often positioned as a core element of mothering.

Hass and Hwang (2008, 86) go further to point out that it is institutional policy and practice that lead to a lack of opportunity for men to be involved in nurturing activities, as well as cultural discourses that emphasise the importance of maternal care. Kershaw (2006) argues that fathers desire more involvement in caring for their children, but are thwarted due to financial rewards of sticking to traditional gender roles, and by socialised patriarchal attitudes to labour division. It is deemed that men are not participating in unpaid care work, not because they are lazy or 'bad' parents, but because they are reasonable people who are taking advantage of what social policy offers them (ibid).

Kershaw (2006) considers policy options under the neoliberal Canadian context to support the 'universal caregiver model' that Fraser (1994) envisages, and recommends a caregiving analogue to workfare that would use policy more aggressively to influence men's choices between employment and care. His argument supports the state authority to impose citizenry care obligation in order to universalise care responsibility for men. Kershaw (2006, 356) states that the only way to defend against 'the deleterious dynamic', in which 'the failure to oblige all to partake in some caregiving perpetuates added vulnerability for those who do', is for 'welfare contractualism to embrace some care activities as a civic duty that binds men as much as women and that is enforced on a par with emergent employment and job search obligations as well as taxation'. He conceptualises this as *carefair*. As Fraser (1994, 612) pointed out, in this carefair, the key is to develop policies that discourage free-riding of unpaid care. Such policy includes some economic sanctions on those who do not take part in care giving such as postponed eligibility for a full public pension and the loss of leave benefits.

Parental leave can be considered degendered policy, as it can ignore the materiality of embodied motherhood that is acutely marked for women after they have given birth, as critiqued by Stephens (2011). However, parental leave policy can be constructed in a way to acknowledge embodied motherhood and at the same time encourage men to engage in caring. For instance, Blofield and Martínez Franzoni (2015) suggest a way to distinguish policy that recognises 'embodied motherhood' as well as redressing the gender gap in the involvement with caring, from one that recognises and rewards care as a female responsibility without seeking to reduce the gender gap per se. They categorise the former as maternalist floor policy, and the latter as

maternalist policy. Maternalist policies recognise the importance of caregiving but these make it solely or primarily women's responsibility (ibid; 47). Such policy is based on maternalism that 'exalts women's capacity to mother and extends to society as a whole the values they attached to that role; care, nurturance, and morality' (Michel 2012). Thus, maternal policies have the effect of constraining maternal practice only to women.

On the other hand, maternalist floor policy acknowledges the role of women in giving birth and breast feeding by providing maternity leave that helps women to recover from giving birth and to establish routines and bonds with the new born<sup>i</sup>. However, 'generous maternity leave beyond this period of time, or a tax incentive or a cash transfer for stay-at-home mothers can be considered maternalist' (Blofield and Martínez Franzoni 2015, 47). As mentioned earlier, maternalist policy decreases fathers' unpaid work time (Hook 2006). Maternalist policy would hinder a society to establish either the universal caregiver model or the universal breadwinner model. Maternalism embedded in a maternalist policy would therefore obstruct the enhancement of gender equality in both paid and unpaid work. For instance, Miura (2014) provides an insightful discussion of how strong maternalism hinders Japanese society in increasing both female labour participation and the fertility rate, and leads women not to form a family.

I would argue that maternalist floor policy is not degendered policy if embodied motherhood is addressed through maternity leave strategies which, for example, in the case of the EU, create a minimum standard for maternal health and welfare. Maternalist floor policy is realised in parental policy in which each parent can take parental leave after the mother takes maternal leave.

### **Concluding discussion: parental leave, maternalism and maternal thinking**

A remaining question is whether or not the development of a parental leave policy which places incentives for fathers to take up leave is a sign of a 'farewell to maternalism'. Stephens (2011, 41) highlights that far from witnessing the expansion of maternal forms of subjectivity to men and to the wider society, as Ruddick so persuasively advocated, there has been a contraction of the value of care and nurturance in the public sphere. She then refers to Orloff's (2009) statement that maternalism at the policy level has been well and truly dismissed. It seems that even though Stephens (2011) examines the different nature of the concepts of maternalism and maternal thinking, her discussion implies that she considers the 'farewell to maternalism' as almost equivalent to a denial of care and nurture. However, as the preceding discussion reveals, a farewell to maternalism does not directly indicate a contraction of the value of care and nurturance. I would argue that this 'farewell to maternalism' is not the core problem, as maternalism limits the opportunity to get engaged with maternal practice and thinking only to

women. In this sense, a farewell to maternalism even offers a positive feminist vision of postmaternalism.

I consider that a careful discussion regarding maternalism and maternal thinking must be required to understand what gender equality policy aims to achieve. I argue that it is the policy discourse surrounding parental leave, in particular institutionalised incentives for father to take up the leave that creates a space to disseminate opportunities for men to experience maternal practice, which will allow the realisation of maternal thinking. Policy encouraging men's involvement with care is not only aimed at realising gender equality both in the public and domestic sphere, but it aspires to an alternative social formation by supporting men and allowing them to experience maternal practice and thinking. According to Ruddick (1995, 131) a defining task of caregiver's work is to maintain mutually helpful connections with another person whose separateness they create and respect. Thus, caregivers are continuously involved with issues of connection, separation, development, change and the limits of control. As a form of practice-based reasoning, maternal thinking is a type of reasoning developed through the daily practice of continuous effort in building sustainable relationships with 'unpredictable and, as yet, unimagined difference' (Ruddick 1995, 134). Therefore, maternal thinking is a way of respecting and connecting with different and separated others.

At the policy level, the dual earner and dual caregive model can create a transformative space for men to experience the maternal thinking that confronts the cultural logic of what Stephens conceptualises as postmaternal thinking. Thus, when incentives or sanctions for motivating men to take parental leave are well integrated into parental leave policy, postmaternalism could in fact concede a glimmer of hope.

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<sup>i</sup> Blofield and Martínez Franzoni (2015) refer to the ILO agreement 183 that defines maternity leave of 14 weeks.